#2

Summary: Part II of the novel switches focus to a nine year old girl named Laila. She is a more modern Afghan woman than Mariam, as she and her father place much importance on her education. Her mother, however, ignores Laila and spends her time pining for her sons, Ahmad and Noor, who have gone off to war. Laila’s best friend is her neighbor Tariq, with whom she spends most of her time. She is good friends with his whole family and often has dinner at their house. He leaves for a few weeks and Laila has trouble getting by without her best friend. Laila’s mother becomes incapable of doing anything besides lying in bed and grieving over her sons’ absence. She is not much of a mother to Laila, and Laila begins doing most of the work around the house. One day a man comes to the door and brings the news of Ahmad and Noor’s passing in the jihad. Laila’s mother becomes even more distraught and develops a hatred for her husband, as he let the boys enlist. After the funeral activities Laila’s mother becomes even more ill and Laila is worried that she is contemplating suicide. At this time, the only person Laila feels that she can confide in is Tariq, and their relationship begins to grow. Laila learns that her father dreams of taking her and her mother away to America for a new life, but he wouldn’t so long as her mother was against it. Finally, the Mujahideen is victorious and the Soviet Union falls apart. Laila’s mother comes out of her depression and is back to her normal self. They have a party to celebrate the achievement, but shortly afterwards the war returns. Kabul suffers from continuous rocket attacks and many families are forced to leave. Tariq’s family decides to flee the city and Tariq tells Laila the day before he leaves. Both are heartbroken, as they have fallen in love with each other, and the night before he leaves they make love. Seventeen days go by and without school and Tariq, Laila is lost. Her father tells her that they will also be leaving the city and they plan to go to Pakistan. The day that they are packing a rocket hits the house.

Analysis: I still really enjoy *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and through Part II I find it even more relatable because of what Laila experiences through her young adult life. Her character is an easy one to take a liking to because she is intelligent, caring, and well beyond her teenage years. I think this liking is due to Khaled Hosseini’s portrayal of his female characters, because Mariam is the same way. I like his depiction of strong women and I think that really adds to the story. Also, the hardships that are described in the novel really encourage you to reflect on what is important. The plot covers many topics: difficult arranged marriages, rape, depression, suicide, domestic violence, war, and death. Since the novel is a story about two young girls, the topics are not entirely graphic and dark, but Hosseini incorporates them wisely so that the reader may ponder them.

Application: The most obvious representation of our course essential questions in this novel is Laila’s pursuit of love. Throughout Part II Laila seeks the love of her father, her mother, and Tariq. Her father’s love is not difficult to pursue as Laila is his pride and joy. Much unlike his wife, Laila’s father invests wholeheartedly into his daughter and it shows through his thoughts and actions. For her mother’s love, it really is a journey of pursuit. Her mother never loved Laila as much as she loved her older sons, Ahmad and Noor. Then when her sons went off to fight she spent her time moping around instead of being a mother to Laila. Finally, Laila seeks the love of Tariq, her best friend with whom she has developed more feelings. The pair gets closer and closer as the story progresses, first with a kiss, and then several meetings in hiding. The culmination is Tariq’s last day in Kabul, because they know that they will never see each other again.